

# Connecticut Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet

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## Appropriations, Human Services and Public Health Committees Public Hearing

September 15, 2009

Re: Federal Block Grants

By: Carol Walter, CT Coalition to End Homelessness

Thank you to the Committee Members for this opportunity to speak to you today regarding the federal Block Grant Allocation Plans. My name is Carol Walter and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH). CCEH is a member of the CT Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet, a statewide coalition comprised of 19 nonprofit human service associations and organizations representing approximately 800 nonprofit human service providers. Members of the Nonprofit Cabinet play a vital role in addressing the critical needs that face so many Connecticut residents – we provide the safety net that *anyone* can find themselves in need of in the blink of an eye.

As you know, there is flat funding to the bulk of the federal block grants. As I am sure you are aware, flat funding actually results in cuts to providers when inflation and other programmatic cost increases are considered. We are all aware of the difficult economic times facing not only Connecticut, but the entire nation. Providers and those we serve have already struggled through one state fiscal year full of rescissions, and another with reduced allotments and more rescissions likely just around the corner. While service demand has gone up, capacity to meet the demand has not. Cuts to the essential services funded by these block grants will only result in increased costs to the state in the long run as many of these services focus on prevention.

For example, retroactive cuts executed by DSS last June resulted in decreases to all 44 of CT's emergency homeless shelters. At a time where the overall shelter occupancy rate has topped 100%, a startling statistic, shelter providers learned of a one time cut---some exceeding \$20,000---as well as an approximate 3% reduction for the coming fiscal year. Our shelter system is the last resort for individuals, families and children who would be otherwise sleeping on our streets or camped out in ER waiting rooms, public libraries, train stations and shopping malls during the cold months. Not only do these critical services provide a vital safety net for our most vulnerable citizens, they prevent further expense in medical, police, ambulance, and other institutions that result from their neglect.

Regarding the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), while the federal budget is not yet passed, Connecticut's proposed portion will be flat-funded at approximately \$19.6 million. However, as there are no carry-forward funds available this year, the Department of Social Services has proposed a 4.1% across-the-board cut to SSBG funded services. It is important to also note that, as I mentioned above, flat-funding by the federal government does result in a cut to providers due to inflation and increased demand, so the actual resulting cut felt by providers in FFY10 will be more than 4.1% seen on paper. Thousands of Connecticut residents rely on services funded through SSBG such as: housing, counseling, legal assistance, family planning, case management, substance abuse prevention and treatment, transportation, and protective and special services for individuals with disabilities. These are all services that many of us take for granted – either thinking we will never need them or we will be able to easily access them – but that is not the case for many people.

Our state and federal government will surely continue to struggle in the current economic climate and we are guaranteed more difficult years ahead that will likely jeopardize funding for the vital services supported through the block grants. As the Cabinet has testified in previous years, we are depending on the state to provide guidance and leadership in making some crucial long-term

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Connecticut AIDS Resource  
Coalition

Connecticut Association for  
Community Action

Connecticut Association for  
Human Services

Connecticut Association of Area  
Agencies on Aging

Connecticut Association of  
Nonprofits

Connecticut Coalition Against  
Domestic Violence

Connecticut Coalition to End  
Homelessness

Connecticut Community Providers  
Association

Connecticut Consortium of Legal  
Services

Connecticut Council of Family  
Services Agencies

Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis  
Services

Connecticut Women's Consortium

Easter Seals Connecticut

End Hunger Connecticut!

Oak Hill

Planned Parenthood of Connecticut

The Connection, Inc.

Wheeler Clinic

decisions about block grant funded services. The Legislative and Executive Branches need to consider, long-term, what our priorities are when it comes to block grant funded services and what funding the state is willing to make up for when federal cuts are made. This includes developing mechanisms to make intelligent cuts, only when absolutely necessary, that are based on fair and equitable performance evaluation measures, meaningful contract compliance measures and true cost-benefit analysis.

As essential health and human services programs continue to be vulnerable to rescissions and budget cuts, I urge your careful consideration of block grant funding allocation. It is unreasonable to ask anyone to choose randomly between valuable programs and significant, life-altering needs such as: child care vs. transportation, substance abuse treatment vs. in-home health services, energy assistance vs. food assistance, emergency shelters vs. transitional living. Every need is crucial, every service is important and every life is equally valuable.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

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**Testimony of Susan Lloyd Yolen, Vice President, Public Affairs & Communication  
Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, on the  
Department of Social Services FY 2010 Allocation Plan, Social Services Block Grant  
September 15, 2009**

Thank you for allowing Planned Parenthood to comment on the proposed allocation plan for the Social Services Block Grant. I am Susan Lloyd Yolen, Vice President for Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, soon to become Planned Parenthood of Southern New England with our impending merger with the Rhode Island Planned Parenthood affiliate. Planned Parenthood is the state's largest provider of family planning and reproductive health care, operating 18 health centers across the state and caring for over 62,000 patients (9% of whom are men).

For decades, family planning has been ranked a high priority of this block grant, seen as helping at-risk young families by giving the working poor an important preventive health tool to stay productive and employed. Our organization has administered the Connecticut SSBG family planning program, (which includes other providers of family planning in addition to Planned Parenthood), since the inception of the grant.

The need for family planning services continues to increase as the women and men of Connecticut lose jobs and work hours, and, with these losses, their health coverage. Family planning programs help prevent the unplanned pregnancy and disease that result in further job loss and lead to enrollment on Medicaid or TANF.

The DSS family planning program is a bargain by any standard: Planned Parenthood and our delegates provide about 22, 500 visits each year, at an average subsidy of only about \$45 per visit. Since none of these patients has Medicaid or private insurance, they often contribute personally toward the cost of their own care, helping make up the difference.

It's hard to face this committee and ask that cuts to the SSBG be prevented or minimized given the state of the economy, the state and federal budgets, and the steps we all must embrace in good faith, for the common good. Planned Parenthood *can survive* a 4% cut. But it is worth noting that this grant has dwindled over the years, never increasing with the cost we must pay to do business...to hire health care professionals... and with ourselves and other nonprofit providers of service always called upon to absorb the decrease. As mission driven agencies, we do our best to roll with the punches, but that does not make doing so easy, or right.

Planned Parenthood joins other recipients of SSBG funds today asking that DSS do its level best to keep cuts to this important resource to a minimum in FY 2010. Thank you.

